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Éditorial - La spiritualité au 21^e siècle

Nous célébrons donc le centième anniversaire du décès du Bienheureux Columba Marmion, survenu à Maredsous le 30 janvier 1923.

Un double Colloque permettra de réfléchir à ce qui fut certainement le cœur de la sainteté du Bienheureux: sa spiritualité, son rayonnement spirituel. On le trouve, bien sûr, dans sa façon de communiquer sa Foi, comme prêtre d'abord, comme Abbé d'une Communauté bénédictine ensuite (dont un de ses devoirs principaux, selon la Règle de Saint Benoît, est d'enseigner ses "frères"), puis, comme prédicateur de retraites et comme conseiller spirituel auprès d'innombrables personnes qu'il n'hésitait pas à soutenir (même psychologiquement)

dans leur cheminement humain pour les ouvrir à leur vocation spirituelle que ce soit dans le cadre d'une vie religieuse ou dans leurs devoirs de laïcs (mères de famille, fiancés, responsables divers dans la société... jusqu'à la Reine Élisabeth de Belgique au lendemain de la guerre 14-18).

Le Vice-Postulateur Irlandais de la Cause du Bienheureux nous rappelle l'essentiel de la doctrine spirituelle du Bienheureux. Mais il situera également sa "sainteté" dans l'Irlande d'alors et d'aujourd'hui!

Fr. R.-Ferdinand Poswick, osb
Vice-Postulateur

The Spirituality of Blessed Columba Marmion

In the centenary year of the death of Blessed Columba Marmion it is appropriate to revisit the spiritual teaching of someone whom Dom Raymond Thibaut described as a "master of the spiritual life". His teaching made a deep impression on his listeners and attracted an enormous worldwide readership. While some aspects of his thought need to be supplemented by important teachings from the Second Vatican Council, it remains nonetheless a valuable source of spiritual insight, calling us back to the core of our Christian identity.

A Spirituality Centred on Christ

One only has to look at the titles of Columba Marmion's three best-known books to discover the heart of his spirituality. *Christ the Life of the Soul*, *Christ in His Mysteries* and *Christ the Ideal of the Monk* are all expressions of a spirituality which in the language of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, "prefers nothing whatsoever to Christ." "He is our all", Blessed Columba said. Our spiritual life derives from Christ.

This spirituality looks to Christ as our model, not only as regards our behaviour but, even more importantly, as regards who we are. Blessed Columba emphasised the importance of faith in the divinity of Christ, and this has huge implications for who we are. If Christ our model is both human and divine, then so are we, by his gift. He said, "Christ is the Son of God by nature and by right, in virtue of the union of the Eternal Word with human nature; we are so by adoption and grace, but we are so really and truly." (*Christ the Life of the Soul*, Chapter 2) Through Baptism we are incorporated into him as members of his body, sharing his divinity, his unique relationship with God the Father.

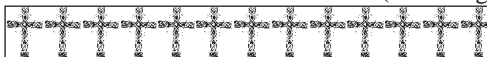
The idea of being divine may seem too much for us, given especially the reality of sin in our lives. Blessed Columba emphasises that it is by the gift of Christ that we are justified before God: Christ himself is our wisdom, our justification, our holiness. He shares all that is ours (including our weaknesses

and the burden of our sin) and we share in all that is his, including his 'merits' – his rightful state of being one with God. This is his gift of 'atonement'. In our spiritual life we 'lean' on Christ for everything. Blessed Columba was fond of quoting the text of the Gloria: "You alone are the Holy One". The implication for him is that if we are holy, it can only be the holiness of Christ at work within us because we have become one with him. We can have living contact with him through faith. Thus Christ is not just our model: he is the one who makes us holy.

The gospels tell us that power went out from Christ that healed everyone. A woman touched him in the middle of a crowd and was healed. Her contact with the healing power of Christ was not physical but a contact of faith. We who cannot touch him physically can have just as real a contact if we believe in him as Son of God, according to Blessed Columba.

Being Son or Daughter of God in Christ

Sharing in the gifts of Christ means sharing in his divine filiation. At Christ's Baptism in the Jordan the voice of the Father was heard: "This is my Son." Christ's gift to us is that the same voice addresses us with the same love and the same meaning. The eternal love between the Father and the Son within the Blessed Trinity now encompasses us: we are adopted into Trinitarian life and love. This is the teaching for which Blessed Columba was renowned, and he has been described as the "doctor of divine adoption". He said: "Our holiness is to consist in *adhering to God, known and loved*, not only as the Author of creation, but *as He knows and loves himself* in the bliss of His Trinity; this is to be united to God to the point of sharing His intimate life." (*Christ the Life of the Soul*, Chapter 1). The task of growing in spiritual maturity is to become increasingly aware of this identity in Christ so that it becomes the mainspring of all our thoughts and actions. Being son or daughter of God just as Christ is Son is a source of immense confidence, and we can look to our heavenly Father for all that we need. For



The Spirituality of Blessed Columba Marmion

Blessed Columba everything about our Christian identity and spirituality flows from our adoption into the life of the Trinity.

A Spirituality of Church and Sacrament

Our contact with God in Christ can happen anytime and anywhere, but Blessed Columba emphasises that this happens ultimately through his Church. Blessed Columba was a man of the Church, through and through. For him it was important to remember that the Church “continues the mission of Jesus by her doctrine and jurisdiction, by her Sacraments and worship.” (*Christ the Life of the Soul*, Chapter 5) He emphasised that the Church is not just a historical organisation that emerged after the resurrection of Christ; much more, it is his Mystical Body, of which he is the Head. Together they form one spiritual organism. When Christ speaks to Saul on the road to Damascus he says “Why are you persecuting *me*?” speaking of those whom Saul would later describe as members of Christ’s body. We meet Christ in his body the Church. Blessed Columba was also fond of using nuptial terms to describe the union between Christ and the Church: Christ is the bridegroom and the Church is his bride. How does this work in concrete terms?

Blessed Columba points first of all to the sacraments. The power of Christ comes through them just as it did through his physical body during his earthly life. When the Church celebrates the sacraments, it is Christ who acts: it is Christ who baptises, who forgives, who heals, who offers himself. God is of course serenely free in how he acts, but this is a form of encounter that is adapted to our human nature and flows from Christ’s intentions towards us. Blessed Columba pointed out that experiences of spiritual intensity can be deceptive, whereas in the sacraments we find ourselves on sure ground.

The Church’s worship is the worship of the bride united to her divine Bridegroom and has special efficacy for Blessed Columba. Of particular importance is the artistry with which the Church arranges the liturgical year as a celebration of the mysteries of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. He said that Christ’s mysteries are ours, and in the liturgical year we lay hold of them so as to live by them. At Christmas we celebrate our own beginnings with the coming of Christ among us. In Lent and Easter we die to sin and rise to new life in Christ. At Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit is poured out anew.

Blessed Columba’s spirituality was profoundly liturgical. In his personal spiritual notebooks are many references to insights and inspirations which he gained by meditating on liturgical texts, especially the scriptures given for any particular feast or season. While he was not a liturgical innovator, his personal experience of finding spiritual nourishment first and foremost in the liturgy itself anticipated the vision of Vatican II, which described the liturgy as “the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit”. (Sc14) He was ahead of his time in this respect.

Beyond the sacramental worship of the Church is the role authority within the Church to teach us and to guide our lives, an aspect to which Blessed Columba attached great importance. Although he was well aware of the human frailty of Church leaders, beginning with St Peter himself, he emphasised the importance of obedience. The main attraction of monastic life for him was in fact that it allowed for a more profound

experience of obedience. He said, “I entered monastic life in order to obey.” His deep appreciation of Benedictine spirituality included an awareness that obedience includes a certain frankness on the part of every monk in his conversations with his abbot. Obedience is not a one-way street, in the monastery or in the Church. The contemporary discussion of synodality in the Church raises this question to a new level and is a good context within which to revisit the question of obedience.

A Marian Spirituality

Blessed Columba saw himself as a Child of Mary, from his earliest days in seminary. This was strongly linked to the Christocentric nature of his spirituality. For him, to grow into our divine adoption involves looking to God as our Father and Mary as our mother, after the manner of Christ himself. He expressed this by daily recitation of the rosary and he was confident that if, day after day, we say “Pray for us sinners ... at the hour of our death”, Our Lady will indeed come to our help when the time comes for us to pass from this world. Aware of the uniqueness of each vocation, he was slow to impose any particular Marian devotion on others, suggesting simply that each person choose something and remain faithful to it.

A Personal Spirituality

As suggested in the last paragraph, Blessed Columba’s spirituality included a reverence for the uniqueness of each person. One of the antiphons sung on feasts of saints includes the words “There was no-one like him”, and Blessed Columba saw this as applicable to each of us in our own spiritual journey. In his spiritual teaching his general approach was to draw attention to the broader picture of God’s plan for all of us, leaving room for flexibility when it comes to each personal journey. He thought it was a mistake to try to make everyone fit into the same mould. One aspect that was personal to him, and to some friends from his early seminary days, was the daily devotion of the Stations of the Cross. He found in this a great source of strength and, while he recommended it, he did not impose it on others. His reverence for the different ways in which God works in the lives of different persons is certainly in harmony with St Benedict’s appreciation that people differ as regards their needs, gifts, challenges and abilities.

A Spirituality Inspired by the Bible

When the books mentioned at the beginning of this article were first published, they became immensely popular. It appears that Blessed Columba was offering something that was fresh and nourishing. He himself observed that a likely reason for this success was that his message was mostly an exposition of the word of God. Every page of his published writings is sprinkled with quotations, references or allusions to scripture. It is clear that this was the fruit of his own daily meditation on biblical texts, which he saw as a vital source of light and inspiration, indeed a gift of the Holy Spirit, from Christ himself. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ opens the scriptures for us and helps us to understand those things written there about him. He believed that power went out from Christ through his word just as it had from his person in his



The Spirituality of Blessed Columba Marmion

earthly life, and he saw the scriptures as an especially fruitful source of prayer.

While he was convinced that every page of the Bible was ultimately about Christ himself, there is no doubt that his writings display a much stronger interest in the New Testament than in the Old, the latter receiving comparatively few references, aside from Isaiah, the Song of Songs and the Psalms. The latter became so much part of his personal vocabulary that lines from the psalms appear regularly in his letters as comments on contemporary situations. In the New Testament, Blessed Columba showed particular interest in St John and St Paul, knowing the Pauline corpus more or less off by heart. In *Christ in His Mysteries* he said, of the Bible, “This book is inspired: light and power go out from it to enlighten and strengthen souls that are upright and sincere. Happy are they who open it every day! They drink at the very well-spring of living waters.”

Blessed Columba and the Teaching of Vatican II

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council has in a certain sense overtaken the legacy of Blessed Columba. The council promoted reforms in the liturgy that were beyond what he would have imagined, and conciliar teaching about the Church and salvation gives a much broader view than anything we will find in his writings. On the other hand, his spiritual teaching brings us back to the liturgy and to the Bible as immense spiritual treasures, the true extent of which still remains to be discovered by many ordinary Catholics since the Council. He speaks with eloquent warmth about the extraordinary gift that God offers us through sharing the life of Christ himself, a message that is true for every generation.

Fr. Columba McCann, OSB (Glenstal Abbey)

Il y a 100 ans: l'année 1923 du Bienheureux Columba Marmion

[Comme pour les années précédentes (depuis la livraison de 2013, année 2014 de la vie du Bienheureux), nous présentons les événements vécus par Dom Marmion tels que nous pouvons les saisir à travers sa Correspondance éditée en 2008 (*Columba Marmion, Correspondance: 1881-1923*, Paris, F.-X. De Guibert, 2008, 1362 pages). Les 8 lettres conservées pour l'année 1923 se trouvent aux pages 1262-1265]

Introduction

De cette année 1923 qui lui est fatale – il décède le Mardi 30 janvier 1923 – nous n'avons plus que 8 lettres conservées.

Mais chacune de ces 8 lettres nous donne l'éventail des sentiments et engagements caractéristiques de la personnalité que l'Église, en l'an 2000, montrera en exemple à toute la chrétienté (et... à toute “humanité”!

8 Janvier 1923, Dom Marmion écrit à Mère Marie-Joseph van Aerden. Elle est une correspondante et “dirigée” depuis, au minimum, le 4 Octobre 1900. Nous conservons 80 lettres que Dom Columba lui a écrites. Les Archives de l'abbaye de Maredsous conservent également 37 lettres de cette Carmélite de Louvain que Dom Marmion avait surnommé “Thécla” par allusion aux *Actes de Paul et de Thécles* (apocryphe du Nouveau Testament datant de la fin du 1^{er} siècle), Dom Columba signant ses lettres “Paul”! Dom Marmion aimait attribuer des surnoms à ses correspondantes, manifestant ainsi proximité et familiarité avec ceux et celles avec lesquels il poursuivait des échanges spirituels.

15 Janvier 1923, Dom Marmion écrit une carte postale en style télégraphique (et donc quelque peu sybillin) à son confrère Dom Grégoire Fournier auquel il écrivait déjà en 1887. Ce moine plus ancien lui fera faire connaissance, en 1895, en Irlande, de Joseph Mercier qui allait devenir son pénitent avant de devenir Primat de l'Église de Belgique et Cardinal. Dom Grégoire Fournier était l'homme de confiance de Dom Marmion qui l'enverra, notamment, diriger l'installation manquée des moines de Maredsous au monastère de la Dormition à Jérusalem à la fin de la guerre de 1914-18.

16 Janvier 1923, à la Soeur Edwige Netter: une lettre de direction concise mais d'une spiritualité qui va au cœur des choses, un message adressé à une Bénédictine encore Novice chez les Soeurs bénédictines de la Rue Monsieur à Paris où Dom Marmion a prêché sa dernière retraite du 3 au 10 novembre 1923: un “suivi”... et une attention aussi aux plus jeunes!

16 Janvier 1923, à Dom Eucher Focroulle. Ce moine de Maredsous, entré en 1898, était devenu le Secrétaire de l'Abbé Marmion en 1920 tout en exerçant la charge d'infirmier de la Communauté. Ce qui l'amènera à être très proche de Dom Marmion lors de son ultime maladie. Dans ce mot, Marmion lui annonce son retour d'Anvers (où le peintre Janssens l'avait accueilli afin qu'il puisse “poser” pour son portrait d'Abbé). Il arrivera le 20 Janvier à 19 heures (la gare de Maredsous était opérationnelle depuis 1890). Il lui demande d'envoyer une “voiture” pour le chercher à la gare. Il signe “Tuissimus” (= tout à toi) d'un ton, donc, très “fraternel”!

21 Janvier 1923, à Mère Marguerite-Marie de Richouffitz, Prieure du Carmel de Virton. Responsable ecclésiastique du Carmel de Virton à la demande de l'évêque de Namur, Dom Marmion exerce ainsi sa responsabilité jusqu'à la dernière heure! Marmion aura conseillé la Prieure des Carmélites (1915-1938) depuis 1916, tant par des visites régulières à Virton, que par une vingtaine de lettres. Il lui écrit même encore une fois le 23 Janvier 1923 pour lui faire ses condoléances quand il apprend le décès de sa mère.

Sa “direction” est avant tout un “échange” en toute confiance. Il n'a pas peur de lui confier le poids que constitue pour lui un *Monitum* venu de Rome qui fait écho à des protestations venant de membres de la Communauté de Maredsous estimant qu'il était trop souvent absent de son monastère! Il lui communique qu'il se soumettra au *Monitum* tout en regrettant de faire de la peine aux Carmélites de Virton en renonçant à venir régulièrement chez elles!

Obéissance et poids de sa charge d'une “communauté”: les dilemmes du devoir!



Il y a 100 ans: l'année 1923 du Bienheureux Columba Marmion

23 Janvier 1923, à Mary Fidelis Tidmarsch.

Encore une fidèle "dirigée" de Dom Columba Marmion. D'origine irlandaise, chanoinesse de Saint-Augustin au Couvent Anglais de Bruges, puis à Hayward's Heath (au Sud de Londres). L'original de cette lettre est en anglais. Dom Marmion ne pourra assister à sa profession solennelle imminente, mais il lui donne un petit "programme de vie" que l'on pourrait considérer comme un Testament Spirituel de Dom Marmion [voir le texte ci-contre].

Au moment où il écrit cette lettre, Dom Columba est déjà alité avec la grippe dont il mourra le 30 Janvier!

25 Janvier 1923, au Pape Pie X.

Très probablement rédigée et écrite par son secrétaire, le P. Eucher Focroul (qui est aussi son infirmier), cette lettre soutient l'introduction de la Cause de Béatification d'Émilie d'Oultremont, baronne d'Hoogvoorst (1818-1878), mère de 4 enfants (dont les 2 filles deviendront religieuses dans sa Congrégation); elle fonde, en 1855, la Société des Sœurs de Marie Réparatrice. Elle sera béatifiée par le saint Pape Jean-Paul II, le 12 octobre 1997... moins de 3 années avant le Bienheureux Columba et par le même Pape!

On est le Jeudi 25 Janvier 1923, Dom Marmion célèbre encore péniblement une dernière messe à l'infirmierie. Le Mardi 30 Janvier, il meurt.

Fr. R.-Ferdinand Poswick

Extrait de la Lettre du 23 Janvier 1923 à Mary Fidelis Tidmarsh:

"Juste un petit mot venu tout droit du fond de mon cœur pour vous dire que je suis avec vous dans votre oblation. Saint Paul dit: "*Christus pro omnibus crucifixus est, justus pro injustis ut nos offeret Deo*" ["Le Christ a été crucifié pour nous, juste pour les injustes, pour nous offrir à Dieu" - en réalité, ce texte vient de la première lettre de Pierre: 1 Pi 3.18]. Ce que Jésus crucifié offre à son Père est toujours acceptable, quelque misérables que nous soyons. Je dirai la messe pour vous le 25 demandant à Jésus de vous prendre avec Lui à travers le voile; c'est-à-dire à travers son Humanité crucifiée, pour vous introduire dans le Saint des Saints [Hébr. 9.11-12]. Pendant les exercices de la retraite [que Marmion avait accepté de prêcher au Couvent anglais de Bruges], j'espère vous montrer ce qu'est ce Saint des Saints. Je désire que ce soit *notre* demeure. "Père, disait Jésus, je veux que là où je suis, mes serviteurs soient également" [Jean 17.24]. Je désire que nous passions à travers le voile et que nous habitions là, avec Jésus, dans l'amour".

Ce programme est élevé, mais c'est notre destinée, c'est le désir de Dieu, c'est le fruit de la Passion de Jésus.

Je regrette de n'être pas à Bruges pour votre profession, mais il n'y a pas de distance pour ceux qui sont unis dans le Christ. Je désire que vous fassiez cette petite retraite avec grande ferveur, puisqu'elle contient le programme de ce voyage dans lequel je vous guiderai pendant votre vie."

(Correspondance 1881-1923, p. 1264).

Echoes of Blessed Columba Marmion in Ireland Today

Personal interest

I have had a certain personal interest in the story of Blessed Columba Marmion since I, like him, was a priest of the Dublin diocese before joining a Benedictine monastery, not Maredsous, but the daughter house of Glenstal. In my diocesan days I was trained, and later taught, at Holy Cross College Clonliffe, was a resident at the Irish College in Rome (now moved to its current location on the Coelian Hill) and also had the pleasure of being chaplain to the Redemptoristine Sisters in Drumcondra. So I feel that I have walked in his footsteps, at least geographically, though perhaps the similarity ends there!

My first meeting with Blessed Columba was at the age of sixteen, when a copy of *Christ the Life of the Soul* was put into my hands. It seemed to speak about the spiritual life with a depth that I had never encountered before, but it was also difficult to digest. I must confess that I only read about thirty pages or so, and then gave up! A personal project of mine in this centenary year, is to produce a small book that outlines his spiritual teaching in a more accessible form for the average reader, commenting also on important ways of updating his ideas. Published by Veritas Publications, its title is *Becoming Human Becoming Divine: The Christian Life According to Blessed Columba Marmion*. A year after reading *Christ the Life of the Soul* I was acting organist in the Dublin city-centre church of St Andrew's, Westland Row. Only in later years did I discover

that this was the church where Blessed Columba's parents were married.

My next encounter was as a seminarian at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe. I entered in 1983, and in that year one of the principal assembly rooms of the college was named the "Marmion Room". Students there heard a story about an intense spiritual experience that Blessed Columba had in one of the college rooms, though the details were vague. This year (2022), that college finally closes completely because the number of seminarians is much reduced.

It is in Dundrum parish, where Blessed Columba ministered as a curate shortly after ordination, that we find his memory most alive. The Dom Marmion Society was founded there in 1969. Members of the society care for the elderly and the lonely in the Dundrum area, cheerfully and with compassion, as did their one-time curate in a previous century. This includes a variety of activities four days a week in the Dom Marmion House. Summer holidays and festive social gatherings feature during the year, as do visits to hospitals, nursing homes and private houses. The legacy of Blessed Columba is kept alive in a very practical way that I think must give him immense pleasure! Even a local bridge is named after him. As part of the centenary year celebrations, the Society hopes to pay a visit to the chapel at Edermine House, Co. Wexford where Blessed Columba and the novices of Maredsous took refuge during the First World War.



Echoes of Blessed Columba Marmion in Ireland Today

In 2018 the parish commissioned a new icon of Blessed Columba from the artist Mihai Cucu. Around the central figure of Blessed Columba himself are pictures of six Church buildings related to his life: St Paul's in Dublin, where he was baptised; St Agatha's in Rome where he was ordained; Holy Cross Church in Dundrum; Clonliffe College where he was both student and lecturer; Maredsous; and St Peter's at the Vatican where he was beatified. Other images representing the Trinity and the Mother of God relate to his teaching and his spirituality. The icon also includes a scriptural quotation: *For Me to Live is Christ*. The icon was blessed by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin on 30th September 2018 during a celebration of Evening Prayer. The occasion also offered the opportunity for a short presentation of the spiritual teaching of Blessed Columba.

The nearby parish of Ballally is of much more recent origin, and was opened in 1977. A visit to the parish church will reveal another icon of Blessed Columba. The link here is more human than geographical. The current parish priest of Ballally, Fr Jim Caffrey, worked for a number of years in the diocesan Catholic Youth Care, based at St Paul's Church Arran Quay, where Blessed Columba was baptised. Other diocesan appointments were in the Dundrum area where Blessed Columba also served, as well as the parish of St Columba, Iona Road, in which the monastery of St Alphonsus is located. His own godmother was baptised by Blessed Columba. An icon which he had commissioned has travelled with him to its new location in Ballally. The parish has a mission statement for building hope: *Meditation and Service*. They have Blessed Columba as patron of the first, and Mary of Magdala as the second.

The death occurred in June 2021 of Tom Marmion who, with his wife Bernadette, had been engaged in ongoing research into the family background of Blessed Columba. Bernadette has continued the work by putting together the various pieces of evidence that help to clarify the picture of previous generations, especially on his mother's side. Tom had been a regular visitor to Maredsous. His ashes were buried at Glenstal Abbey.

I write these lines at Glenstal, where I receive requests for information, short articles and presentations about Blessed Columba. A portrait of him features in one of the side chapels of our monastery church. But he is also commemorated in the very title of our church and monastery: the monastery of Saints Joseph and Columba, the names given to him at his baptism and monastic profession respectively. Correspondence I receive here includes accounts of blessings and healings, some of which are quite remarkable, believed to have been received through his intercession, though none of the kind that would satisfy the rigorous conditions required for canonization. These include recovery of a young man from brain damage and the extraordinary success of brain surgery on a newborn infant, beyond all expectations. It appears that Blessed Columba does indeed intercede for those in need, but in a manner that is modest and tactful...

In The Company of the Blessed

Blessed Columba is not the only Irish person of recent memory whose sanctity has been officially recognised by the Church. **Saint Charles of Mount Argus** was not, strictly

speaking, an Irishman. Born in Holland in 1821, he ministered as a Passionist Priest in Dublin for twenty-eight years, beginning in 1857. Unlike Blessed Columba, he was not a good preacher, but was outstanding as a confessor, and known for gifts of healing. He died in 1893. He was canonised in 2007.

Blessed John Sullivan entered the Society of Jesus in 1900, four years after his conversion to Catholicism. His ministry was mostly in connection with the Jesuit school Clongowes Wood College (a place also visited by Blessed Columba in his youth). The boys recognised his holiness. One boy went home and said: "Mother we were taught by a saint. And we knew it!" His ministry was not confined to the pupils of the school but extended to the poor, sick and needy in the surrounding area, where his reputation for healing began to grow. He died in 1933 after a short illness. He was beatified in 2017.

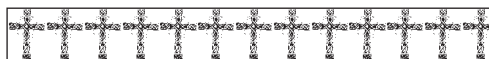
Venerable Matt Talbot was an unskilled labourer who worked mostly in the Dublin docks. Born into a family of heavy drinkers he became an alcoholic in his early teens. His drinking ended after a visit to a priest in Clonliffe College at the age of 28 in 1884. Always a hard worker, his working day began at 5.am with daily Mass, and his evenings were filled with prayer. He died on Trinity Sunday 1925 and was buried on the feast of Corpus Christi. Although there have been attestations of healing through his intercession, to date the right kind of evidence has not become available to advance his beatification. He is for many an unofficial patron of those struggling with addiction. After pledging not to drink any more alcohol at the age of 28, he remained sober until his death forty-one years later.

Born in 1889, **Servant of God Frank Duff** is remembered especially as the founder of the Legion of Mary, with the first meeting taking place on 7th September, 1921. He was a lay observer at the Second Vatican Council, greeted with applause by the assembled bishops when he arrived. He combined a deep compassion for the underprivileged of his native city of Dublin with an intense life of prayer, and was convinced that every person was called to be a saint.

Venerable Edel Quinn (1907-1944) was an Irish lay missionary with the Legion of Mary who worked in Africa. Despite her delicate health (she suffered from tuberculosis), she was tireless, generous and joyful in her faith. She was declared venerable in 1994 by Saint Pope John Paul II. Blessed Columba emphasised the uniqueness of each person in their pattern of holiness. The stories of these holy people shows clearly how the hand of God works with great delicacy moulding each person according to their gifts, their history, their spiritual aptitude.

Echoes in a Changing Ireland

The Ireland of Blessed Columba Marmion, Saint Charles, Blessed John Sullivan and those whose causes for beatification are still underway, is no longer with us. That era in fact represented an unusually high-water mark in Irish Catholic faith and practice. Historians point to a variety of factors, including the growing confidence of the Catholic middle classes after Catholic Emancipation (1829), major social change in the aftermath of the Irish potato famine (1845-1849), and the emergence of a strong movement towards independence from



Echoes of Blessed Columba Marmion in Ireland Today

Britain that fused Nationalism and Catholicism as markers of Irish identity. The Catholic Church in Ireland was a powerful force in social and political life, with a special status even recognised by the Irish Constitution for many decades. Some would say it was too powerful, and being Catholic was, in the minds of many, synonymous with being Irish.

The Irish Bishops recently published a document synthesising the results of the consultation that forms part of the preparation for the forthcoming Synod of bishops. It refers to the changing situation of the Church in Ireland: "This change is being experienced, from a national identity overly dependent on Catholic culture, to one suspicious and often intolerant of its Catholic inheritance." It speaks of "a modern society whose culture is still capable of a Christian sensibility and of affording space for the transcendent, but which has roundly rejected the model of Church which shaped its past." In this context, the call to 'meditation and service' in Ballaly parish, the social outreach of the Dom Marmion Society in Dundrum and the continued attraction of monastic communities such as Glenstal and the Redemptoristine Monastery of St Alphonsus as places

for spiritual refreshment represent signs of hope. In this respect, those echoes of Blessed Columba that still resonate here and there are a welcome sound in the Ireland of today.

The extraordinary and widespread success of the publications of Blessed Columba in the early twentieth century is something worth reflecting on. Blessed Columba himself put it down to the fact that it was based mostly on the word of God. Indeed we know from his personal notes that the main ideas of conferences and writings were the fruit of his own personal meditation on scripture. As the Irish Church undergoes such dramatic changes, with serious questions arising as to its future, perhaps these words from Vatican II represent an avenue forward: "Such is the power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigour, and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life." (DV 21) These are strong words indeed, and offer a basis for planting seeds of new life in the Church today.

Fr. Columba McCann, OSB (Glenstal Abbey)

Célébration du Bienheureux Columba Marmion à Maredsous, le 2 octobre 2022

Laudes

Présidées par le P. Luc Moës

Lecture : Deutéronome 32.3-42

Refrain: Jésus-Christ, notre amour, notre joie!

- Nul ne connaît le Père, sinon le Fils et celui à qui le Fils l'a révélé. Nous te bénissons, Seigneur Christ, de nous avoir révélé Dieu, tel un Père tendre et aimant, juste et bon!
- L'esprit de la prophétie, c'est ton témoignage. Il n'est d'autre sagesse que celle inscrite au cœur de l'évangile, le récit de ta Passion, l'éclat de ta Résurrection!
- Sois béni, Seigneur Jésus, de t'être choisi Gérard et Columba pour te faire connaître, au-delà des siècles, le même sauveur de l'homme désolé!
- Sois béni, Seigneur Jésus, d'avoir à ce point aimé cette région que, depuis Brogne, elle s'appelle Saint-Gérard, le Scrépia Maredsous jubilaire!

Oraison

Père très bon, toi qui fais grandir l'humanité en diffusant les dons de ta paternité et de ta sainteté, fais croître aujourd'hui le peuple des croyants et les communautés de moines et de moniales. Qu'à l'intercession de Saint Gérard et du Bienheureux Columba nous te servions filialement et te chantions harmonieusement dans l'Esprit de ton Fils, Jésus Christ Notre Seigneur:

Notre Père ...

Car c'est à toi qu'appartiennent la Présence (le Règne) paternelle, l'Énergie (la Puissance) de ton Esprit d'amour et la Plénitude (la Gloire) d'Humanité en Jésus ton Fils ressuscité!

Amen

Vêpres

Présidées par le P. Luc Moës

Lecture : 1 Jean 2.18-29

- Seigneur Dieu, notre Père, accorde-nous d'accueillir, envers et contre tout, la présence de ton Christ en notre propre chair, dès lors que tu l'as envoyé pour qu'il nous sauve de l'orgueil et de la mort!
- Seigneur Dieu, notre Père, accorde-nous la persévérance de la foi pour que le Christ nous parle et nous promeuve dans les Mystères, qu'il soit notre repère et notre idéal dans notre vie monastique, la vie de notre âme!
- Seigneur Dieu, notre Père, accorde-nous la liberté et l'audace de quitter nos terres familières pour aller nous mettre toujours à la suite du Christ qui, Fils de l'homme, n'avait pas où reposer la tête!
- Seigneur Dieu, notre Père, accorde-nous d'entreprendre les fêtes du Cent-cinquantième de Maredsous avec le souci de servir plutôt que de paraître.

Oraison

Dieu, notre Père, tu as appelé ton Serviteur Columba à la vie monastique, tu lui as fait la grâce de connaître ton Fils dans ses mystères et de le proposer comme idéal à tous tes enfants d'adoption que sont les baptisés. Donne-nous, à son exemple, de vivre dans le Christ et qu'il vive en nous quand nous accueillons l'Esprit de ce même Jésus, ton Fils, notre frère et notre Seigneur, qui règne avec Toi maintenant et pour les siècles – lui qui nous appris à te prier en disant : Notre Père...



Fête du Bienheureux Columba Marmion - 27^{ème} dimanche ordinaire pour les textes lus et commentés – Homélie par Mgr Hudsyn.

Chers frères bénédictins, sœurs et frères,

“*Ravive le don gratuit de Dieu qui est en toi*” vient de nous dire la 2^{ème} lettre à Timothée. Si nous sommes ici pour fêter le Bienheureux Columba Marmion, c’est bien parce qu’il a lui-même *ravivé* en bien de ses frères et de ses sœurs ce don de la foi qui l’habitait et qui rayonnait de lui.

N’avait-il pas cet art d’éveiller ou de réveiller ceux et celles qu’il rencontrait ou à qui il écrivait au mystère de cette présence de Dieu en eux; de les attirer vers le Christ qui était au cœur de sa foi; de leur donner le goût de la sainteté en laquelle il voyait le chemin de notre *épanouissement complet*? Une sainteté qui ne consiste pas simplement à pratiquer des vertus morales mais qui découle d’une profonde union à Dieu, d’un attachement à la personne du Christ, pour tout vivre en lui: *tous les actes, toutes les œuvres de notre vie*.

Dans la ligne de l’évangile de ce jour, il a vécu en “*serviteur*”. Non pas en “*serviteur inutile*” comme le disent certaines traductions – pas celle de Maredsous!... – mais en humble serviteur. Il était bien conscient que ce que nous pouvons semer de meilleur ne venait pas de nous mais de l’impulsion d’un Autre agissant en nous. D’où la place qu’il accorde à la personne de l’Esprit-Saint, à son action en nous. Cette insistance est d’autant plus frappante que le rôle du Saint-Esprit était relativement peu souligné dans la doctrine de son temps. C’est d’ailleurs pourquoi le pape Léon XIII avait publié en 1897 une encyclique invitant justement à redécouvrir la personne du Saint-Esprit. Il constatait – comme il l’écrivait avec humour – que beaucoup de chrétiens en étaient au même point que ceux qu’avait interrogé S. Paul (Actes 19) et qui lui avaient répondu: “*mais nous n’avons même pas entendu dire qu’il y a un Esprit-Saint*”.

Pour Dom Marmion, il n’en est pas ainsi: il parle de cet attrait tout *spécial* qu’il éprouve pour l’Esprit-Saint. À ses yeux, être chrétien c’est “*ne rien faire que sous l’impulsion du Saint-Esprit*”. C’était sa prière: *Soyons mobiles sous la touche de cet Esprit - Livrez-vous entièrement au Saint-Esprit - Demandons de pouvoir tout vivre dans une dépendance totale à son action*.

Pour lui, au bout du compte, sans l’Esprit d’intelligence, comment entrer dans la profondeur du mystère de Dieu et de son amour? Comment prendre conscience de sa présence en nous? Comment trouver notre assurance intérieure dans cette proximité de Dieu qui nous tient dans la confiance même quand on connaît l’obscurité de la foi. Il le dit: la foi comme confiance, comme abandon de soi, cela ne peut être le fruit de nos pensées, de nos raisonnements, de nos réflexions sur Dieu. Il insiste sur cet abandon, sur ce qu’il appelle notre “*soumission passive à l’action divine*” dans la prière: la chose à faire qui soit la plus agréable à Dieu. Et il ajoute que cet abandon à Dieu dans la prière, c’est aussi la chose *la plus utile qui soit pour l’Église*. Et j’ajouterais: et la plus utile qui soit pour le monde. Non pas que l’Évangile nous rende passif, inactif ou indifférent face aux besoins des autres et du monde. Il s’agit bien sûr d’être serviteur de l’Amour. Mais l’être à la suite du Christ: en menant sa vie dans une remise de soi à un Autre, à ce Dieu qui agit en nous par son Esprit; s’abandonner à lui pour qu’il soit notre inspiration, celui qui nous conseille, celui qui soit notre sagesse, notre intelligence. C’est être les serviteurs de celui qui

s’est fait serviteur. C’est comme l’évoque sa devise, c’est “*être utile au service...*”.

Se situer en serviteur c’est dès lors aussi “*inviter à*” plutôt qu’ “*imposer*”. J’ai été frappé de cette réflexion qu’il a eu et - qu’avec tout ce qu’on a vu dans l’Église ces derniers temps on aurait bien fait de méditer longuement, si bousculant que ce soit - “*Je déteste, disait-il, je déteste ce qu’on appelle “direction”* (il parlait de la direction spirituelle): *il s’y trouve souvent très peu de choses de Dieu et beaucoup de nous-mêmes*”!

Jésus nous invite ce matin à être *serviteur*, à être des *serviteurs ordinaires*... Les conseils spirituels de Dom Marmion ne nous poussent d’ailleurs pas à être des super-héros de la sainteté, des virtuoses de la perfection. Il a cette phrase qui fait penser à la *petite voie* de Thérèse de Lisieux: “*Une petite chose faite au nom de Jésus, pour son amour, est plus grande aux yeux de Dieu que les choses les plus remarquables que nous faisons en notre propre nom*”. Ou encore: “*je le vois bien: prier, travailler, être gai, vaut mieux que les plus grandes austérités*”.

Thérèse d’Avila a écrit ce livre majeur de spiritualité appelé “*Le Chemin de la perfection*”. Je me demande si Dom Marmion n’aurait pas pu écrire de façon tout aussi inspirante “*Le Chemin de l’Imperfection*” puisqu’il disait: “*Nous ne devons pas chercher à éblouir Dieu par notre perfection mais plutôt attirer sa miséricorde par l’aveu de notre faiblesse*”...

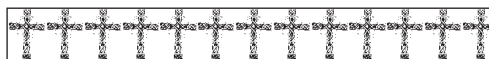
Il connaissait ses faiblesses. Il pouvait comprendre celles des autres. S’il a touché tant de personnes en dehors du monde monastique, n’était-ce pas parce qu’il invitait à rencontrer Dieu non pas dans des choses ou des états d’âme extraordinaires mais bien dans les choses ordinaires de la vie, dans l’apparente banalité du quotidien? Mais de vivre l’ordinaire en ayant toujours devant soi le Christ qui nous aime, en déposant nos faiblesses à ses pieds afin, comme il dit, de “*ne plus agir que par notre amour pour lui*”.

+ Jean-Luc Hudsyn

évêque auxiliaire, responsable du Brabant wallon

Les intentions de la célébration eucharistique sont proposées par le Frère R.-Ferdinand Poswick, Vice-Postulateur de la Cause du Bienheureux Columba

- Avec l’intercession de Saint Gérard de Brogne et du Bienheureux Columba Marmion, nous te prions pour la Sainte Église et pour ses responsables ordonnés ou mandatés, afin que sans cesse nous suivions leurs exemples et leur enseignement.
- Avec Saint Gérard et le Bienheureux Columba, nous te prions plus particulièrement en ce jour pour l’Église qui est à Bruxelles et dans le Brabant wallon afin que ses responsables et ses fidèles soient animés de l’esprit de tous les Saints.
- Avec Saint Gérard et le Bienheureux Columba, nous prions pour tous les responsables politiques, économiques, scientifiques: qu’une sagesse nourrie de charité puisse inspirer leur action.
- Avec Saint Gérard et le Bienheureux Columba, nous prions à toutes les intentions que notre Communauté dominicale porte au profond de chacun de nos cœurs: que notre prière engage, ensuite, notre action!



La spiritualité au 21^e siècle

À l'occasion du centenaire du décès (30 janvier 1923-2023) du Bienheureux Columba Marmion, 3^e Abbé de Maredsous, l'Université de Namur et l'Abbaye de Maredsous proposent une large réflexion sur "La spiritualité au 21^e siècle".

Quelles sont les caractéristiques des spiritualités qui ont inspiré les humains jusqu'à nos jours?

Pour une humanité planétaire où se côtoient toutes les cultures au sein d'un monde hyper-technique et hyper-scientifique peut-on encore parler de spiritualité(s)? Au singulier ou au pluriel?

La spiritualité du Bienheureux Columba Marmion (1858-1923), béatifié par Jean-Paul II en 2000, a formé tous les acteurs du Concile Vatican II (1962-1965).

Deux journées de rencontres aideront à proposer une large réflexion sur ces sujets:

Vendredi 27 Janvier 2023 : organisée à l'Université de Namur à une date proche de la date du décès du Bx Columba Marmion.

Lundi 20 Mars 2023 : organisée à l'Abbaye de Maredsous.

L'ensemble constituera la base d'une publication académique unique.

Le programme complet est sur le site www.maredsous.be

Bibliographie

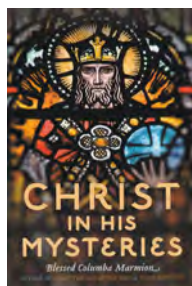


Columba Marmion, *Le Christ dans ses mystères*, Saint-Léger Éditions, 2021

Columba Marmion, *Le Christ, idéal du moine*, Saint-Léger Éditions, 2022

Comme annoncé dans le *Courrier du Bienheureux Dom Columba Marmion* de 2021, les deux volumes complémentaires de la Trilogie des Conférences de Dom Marmion publiées de son vivant par son Secrétaire Dom Raymond Thibaut, ont également parus au cours de l'année 2022.

Ils ont les mêmes caractéristiques que la nouvelle édition de *Le Christ vie de l'âme* telle que décrite dans le numéro précédent du *Courrier*.



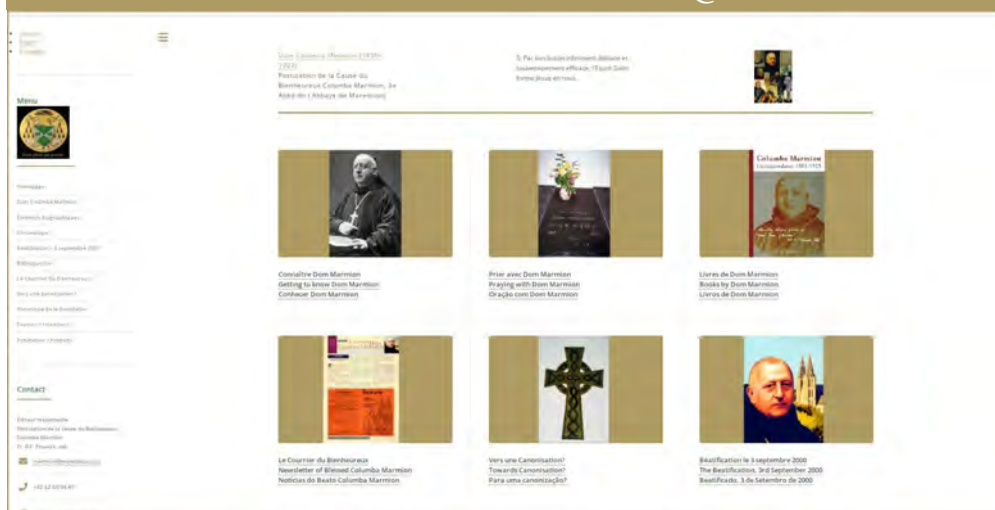
Blessed Columba Marmion, *Christ in his Mysteries*, The Cenacle Press at Silvestream Priory, Stamullen, County Meath, K32 T189, Ireland, 2022, 416 pp. ISBN 978-1-915544-18-6.

Blessed Columba Marmion, *Christ the ideal of the Monk*, Foreword by Abbot Xavier Perrin The Cenacle Press at Silvestream Priory, Stamullen, County Meath, K32 T189, Ireland, 2022, 506 pp. ISBN 978-1-915544-16-2.



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